

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815 (301) 656-4068

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Agronsky & Company

STATION WTOP Radio
Syndicated

DATE February 23, 1985 7:00 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Arms Control/On-Site Inspection

MARTIN AGRONSKY: An interesting development with the Soviet Union on the eve of the beginning again of the arms control talks. The Soviets put out a statement saying that they would accept on-site inspection, which they've always rejected. This time, of course, of civilian nuclear installations. Now --and an indication when the statement was made that it would apply to, indeed, and should be regarded as an indication of their willingness to go ahead with the arms control talks.

Is that really a significant move, in your opinion, on the part of the Soviets?

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER: I think it's a good sign, although you always have to remember that just before a negotiation the Russians are specialists at peace offensives, and this is a minor peace offensive.

I think the fact that they're willing now to contemplate on-site inspection is a sign that insisting on it, on our part, is a good thing, a good negotiating strategy.

JAMES J. KILPATRICK: It's an encouraging sign, Martin. Sure it is. But it's a long step from a nuclear electric power generating plant to inspection of nuclear arms.

AGRONSKY: But it is a breakthrough. They've never accepted any kind of on-site inspection for anything before. And we can hope that this would be...

HUGH SIDEY: They've let our scientists see it, though, Martin. Our scientists have seen a number of their facilities. And this isn't that far removed from that. We've had people in

OFFICES IN: WASHINGTON D.C. • NEW YORK • LOS ANGELES • CHICAGO • DETROIT • AND OTHER PRINCIPAL CITIES

2

their rocket launches and we've seen their laboratories.

AGRONSKY: You want to be very cautious about this.

SIDEY: Yeah, be very careful about it. But sure, take it.

MARIANNE MEANS: They want to send a signal that they are serious.

AGRONSKY: Well, the CIA has come up with an interesting signal. Its intelligence estimates of the amount of spending the Soviet Union does on defense indicate now for the last -- no, for the years from '76 to '83, for seven years, that the Soviets have been spending a lesser percentage of their gross national product on defense than the United States. Which is really opposite from what the...

KILPATRICK: Martin, I think you've got that wrong.

KRAUTHAMMER: Martin, I think...

AGRONSKY: Well, let's discuss this in a minute.

*

*

*

AGRONSKY: Jack, those figures aren't all that clear, but the thrust of it is: that they have not spent more than we have on defense in the period from '76 to '83. And the indications are that we have spent more. What we don't know is what they spent it on.

KILPATRICK: Well, this is a statement by Robert Gates, Deputy Director for Intelligence, CIA. He said there have been two distinct periods in Soviet defense spending since '65. Before 1976, growth in total defense spending had averaged about four to five percent. After 1976, the rate of increase in spending dropped to about two percent.

AGRONSKY: Two percent.

KILPATRICK: But Mr. Gates also says it's clear that these figures imply a defense burden higher than our estimate of 13 to 14 percent of GNP. He says the Soviet Union is spending 13 to 14 percent of its gross national product, twice the comparable figure for the United States. And then, as he says, it could be higher than that.

KRAUTHAMMER: But Martin, all our debates on this issue are off the mark. I mean we really suffer in these debates from sort of a ruble fetish. All we concentrate on is the absolute

numbers.

The question is not how much they're spending, but what they're buying. In the last 15 years the Russians have acquired a blue-water new Navy for the first time in their history; a first strike strategic capacity, also the first time in their history; and most important, an airlift capacity to service all of their colonies, from Ethiopia to South Yemen to Angola.

Now, if they can do all of this on a two percent annual increase, it seems to me we ought to tip our hats to the Kremlin, get them to come in as consultants to the Pentagon on how to do it. But instead it's going to be used as an argument to slash American defense spending.

AGRONSKY: You don't read it as that at all.

KRAUTHAMMER: Absolutely not.

SIDEY: I'm a little suspicious of the numbers too, Martin. The report itself is confusing. The fact of the matter is...

AGRONSKY: You're not suspicious of the accuracy of the observations. You mean the CIA...

SIDEY: The interpretation. I just think it's very hard to figure it out.

KILPATRICK: Mr. Gates says there's uncertainties here.

SIDEY: Yes. The point of it is, their overall spending remains much greater than ours, as near as we can tell.

And then, also, you have to consider they already have an army that's twice as big as ours. They have tanks -- what is it, eight times what we have, or the NATO nations have? Their fighter planes outnumber us. Their missiles, three-four times as many as we do at this point, Martin. So it's still overwhel...

AGRONSKY: You think we should run just as scared as usual.

SIDEY: Up until we see...

KRAUTHAMMER: If war brokes out, Martin, they're not goign to throw rubles at us.

MEANS: Well, I think Charles' argument can be turned on its head, where you say that it didn't matter the numbers they we're spending, it's what they were spending it on. I mean

4

Secretary Weinberger keeps going up to Capitol Hill and talking about the numbers that counts, that if he doesn't get a six percent real increase, he gets a three percent instead, it will be disastrous. So he's talking about...

KILPATRICK: Well, the Soviet Union is not spending 18 billion on military retirement.

SIDEY: But also, their military is totally integrated with their civil economy. The factories that turn out tractors turn out tanks. And the point of it is, you know, to get accurate pictures is terribly difficult.

AGRONSKY: ...confident in this report at this time.

SIDEY: No, I don't read it as...

AGRONSKY: Jack, let's look at the Supreme Court....